

TRAIL COUNT



Annual Count & Survey of San José Trails



SAN JOSE
**PARKS, RECREATION &
NEIGHBORHOOD SERVICES**




About Trail Count 2017

Trail Count is an annual count and survey conducted along San José Trails. The volunteer-supported effort gathers valuable data from trail users to improve planning, design and gathering of financial resources through competitive grant-writing. Counts were initiated in 2007 to document the negative impact of trail closures resulting from large-scale special events. Count data from that first year supported creation of a formal Trail Closure Process to reduce the occurrence of trail closures. For over a decade, Trail Count has documented the increasing usage of the City's Trail Network and captured information from trail users that supports competitive grant writing, better operations & maintenance, and more insightful planning and design approaches.

Trail Count 2017 occurred on Wednesday, September 13. A mid-September date is recommended by the *National Bicycle and Pedestrian Documentation Project*.

Six count stations were established along three trail systems. Fewer count stations were used from prior years as the Three Creeks Trail station was closed due to on-going construction and the Five Wounds Trail (future) is well-documented from prior counts and the site's property acquisition has yet to be completed. For the first time, two of the City's on-street bike lanes are included in the count. Data was collected during the morning and afternoon peak periods for the Fourth Street Bike Lane and the San Fernando Street Bike Lane.



TRAIL COUNT 2017 is San José's 11th annual count and survey to support better planning, design, operations & pursuit of grant funding.

The highest volume count station (Guadalupe River Trail - River Oaks Parkway) recorded a **2.2% increase** over last year. All other stations recorded declines in usage, ranging from **1.8% to 21.5% decreases**. These decreases were less than the increases measured in 2016; supporting an upward trend at most stations. The decrease in use is consistent with a national trend. The US Census' American Community Survey (released 2016) found general declines in biking rates, even in the best biking cities. <http://bikeleague.org/content/bike-commute-growth-has-leveled-some-cities-still-show-way>

\$5,400,000

New FY 2016-17 Grant funding
secured with **Trail Count** data



Analysis

Planning Process

This year's count was held on Wednesday, September 13. The month of September is recommended by the [National Pedestrian and Bicycle Documentation project](#) (NPBD). San José follows the NPBD's recommendation because:

1. School is in session.
2. Weather is mild with rain unlikely.
3. Daylight hours extend past 6:00 pm.
4. Several applications are due late in the year so data timely.

A 12-hour count was used at five stations. Peak Hour counts (7:00-9:00 AM and 4:00-6:00 PM) was used at the Los Gatos Creek-Auzerais Avenue station. This station has low usage (<200) and its proximity to Downtown and Diridon Station suggests that peak travel counts makes the best use of volunteer hours. A peak-hour count is consistent with the recommendations of the NPBD when volunteer resources are limited.

Weather did not appear to limit trail use. Morning clouds and mid-60's temperatures warmed to mid-70's in the afternoon with partly cloudy skies.



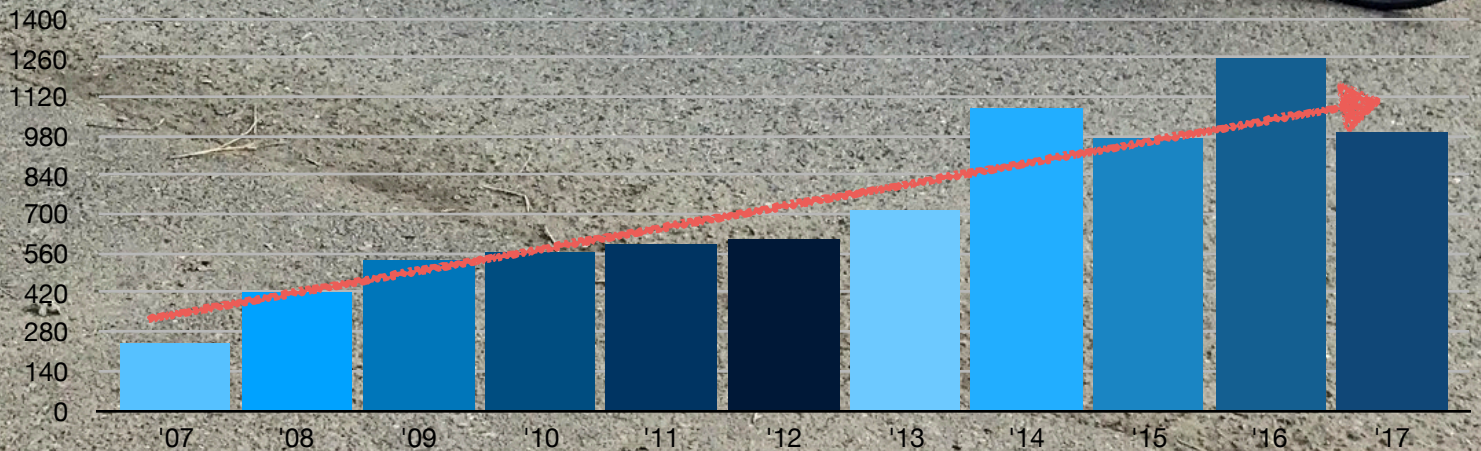
Count Station Descriptions

1. **Guadalupe River Trail at Coleman Avenue:** The station is located north of downtown San José. The trail travels through the 250-acre Guadalupe River Park & Gardens. The park's continuous trail borders large employers and housing developments. The Guadalupe River Trail system extends 9 miles from downtown to Silicon Valley's Golden Triangle (major employers include Cisco, Cadence, eBay). A 12-hour count was conducted.

Guadalupe River Trail

Coleman Avenue Count Station

Hosted by Guadalupe River Park Conservancy

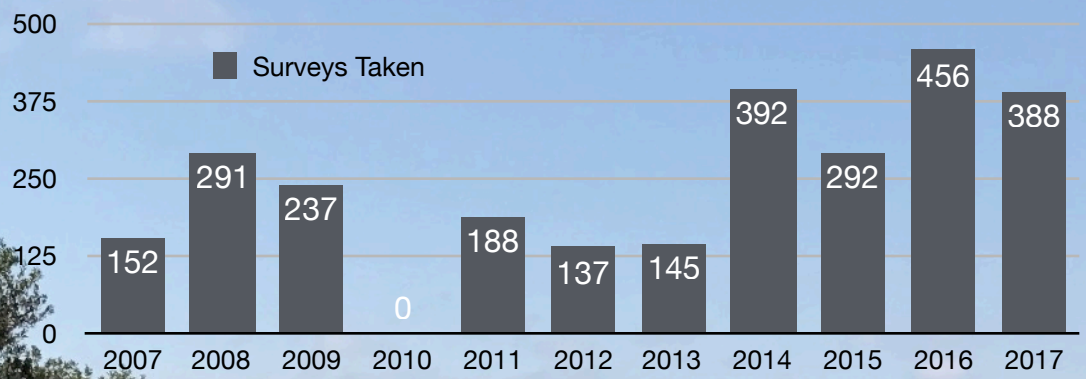


2. **Guadalupe River Trail at River Park Towers:** This new station is centrally located in Downtown San José. It replaced a station at nearby Park Avenue that was retired this year after a decade of use. The trail at the prior station was circuitous and difficult for counters to track an individual and avoid double counts. Counters reported concerns about their data collection in 2015 and 2016. The River Park Towers location supported an easier and possibly more accurate count since a single alignment is monitored. A 12-hour count was conducted.
3. **Guadalupe River Trail at River Oaks Parkway:** This station has the highest annual count and captures travel along the trail and the perpendicular River Oaks Parkway Bridge and Ramp. River Oaks Parkway links North First Street Light Rail to the Rivermark Neighborhood. A 12-hour count was conducted.
4. **Los Gatos Creek at Auzerai Avenue:** This reach of the regional trail system is currently disconnected from the larger system and short in length (about 0.5-mile). The trail links Willow Glen (via Lonus Street, near Lincoln Avenue) to Midtown, a neighborhood to the west of Downtown. Auzerai Avenue is a low-volume arterial roadway with a signed bikeway leading directly to the Guadalupe River Park and trail near the Children's Discovery Museum. The recently developed Del Monte Park borders a portion of the trail to the west and offers a public restroom, dog park and play fields. Morning and Evening Peak counts were conducted.
5. **Los Gatos Creek at Hamilton Avenue:** The regional trail system extends 9 miles from Meridian Avenue in San José, through Campbell and Los Gatos, terminating at the Lexington Reservoir dam. Los Gatos Creek is recognized as one of Silicon Valley's most popular trails. The trail is adjacent to employment, housing, retail and park/open space. A 12-hour count was conducted.
6. **Los Alamitos Creek near Camden Avenue:** The 6-mile trail system links to Lake Almaden, Calero Creek and Guadalupe River trails. The trail system travels through and along open space bounded by low-density residential development. A 12-hour count was conducted.

Data Collection Method

Volunteers were provided with the following tools.

- **Count Sheet:** The Trail Count sheet permitted volunteers to count trail users at 30-minute increments. The sheet provided space to count pedestrians, bicyclists and skaters, as well as their direction of travel. A "notes" field permits the recording of other user types (equestrian, Segway, etc.) or unusual conditions; special event attendees.
- **Survey "Postcard":** A postcard was offered to trail users when safe to do so. The postcard asked users to complete the on-line survey by Sunday, September 17.
- **Instructions:** Guidance for preparing and returning the count sheet.
- **Support:** The Trail Network Manager and Volunteer Coordinator attempted to visit all sites early in the day to respond to questions about the count process. Follow-up visits occurred through the day and evening.

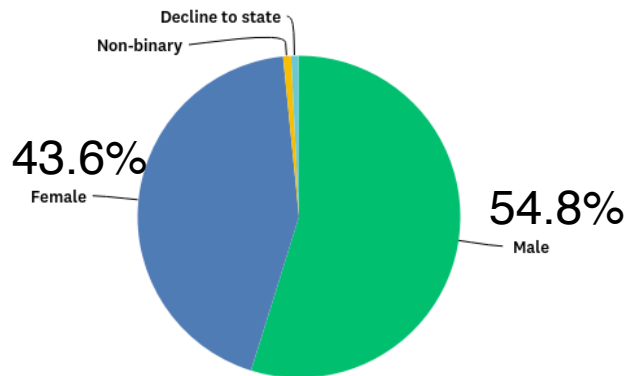


Count Station (high volume sites only)	12-hour Count	Annual Average Daily Traffic (AADT)	Annual Volume
Guadalupe at River Park Towers	724	765.41	279,375
Guadalupe at Coleman	996	1,058.38	386,309
Guadalupe at River Oaks Pkwy	2,376	2,408.07	878,946
Los Gatos at Auzerais	160	118.62	43,296
Los Gatos at Hamilton	1,135	1,214.20	443,183
Los Alamitos at Camden	832	944.82	344,859

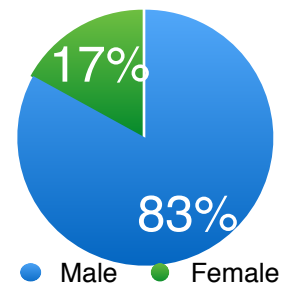
Findings

Over 6,200 trail users were counted this year. The table includes prior year count data for comparative purposes. The day's count data was used to estimate the annual trips occurring along the trails, calculated with the Rails To Trails Conservancy's Trail Traffic Calculator. The calculator considers climate, time of year, and other factors to project a likely annual figure¹.

Survey Data



Observed Data



TRAIL COUNT LOCATION	2015	2016	2017
Guadalupe at Coleman	977	1269	996
Guadalupe at River Park	N/A	N/A	724
Guadalupe at Park / San Fernando	1055	1306	N/A
Guadalupe at River Oaks	2270	2325	2,376
Los Gatos at Auzerais	167	171	160
Los Gatos at Hamilton	1137	1380	1,135
TOTAL	6670	7774	6223

BIKEWAY LOCATION	2015	2016	2017
San Fernando Street Bike Lane	N/A	N/A	309
Fourth Street Bike Lane	N/A	N/A	112

¹ <http://www.railstotrails.org/our-work/research-and-information/trail-modeling-and-assessment-platform/trail-traffic-calculator/>

Counters are asked to identify bikers, walkers and “other” on the standard count sheet. The Guadalupe River Trail-Coleman Avenue Count Station (managed by the Guadalupe River Park Conservancy) supplements that data by counting the number of male and female trail users as well. The number of females observed along the trail is less than the national statistic; 25% of trail users are female.



Guadalupe River Trail
Coleman Avenue
21.5% Decrease

Guadalupe River Trail
River Oaks Parkway
2.2% Increase

Los Gatos Creek Trail
Auzerais Avenue
1.8% Decrease

Los Gatos Creek Trail
Hamilton Avenue
17.8% Decrease

Los Alamitos Creek Trail
Camden Avenue
9.6% Decrease

On-Line Survey

The on-line survey was open from September 11 to September 17. There were 388 respondents. Twenty questions included common demographic questions per past surveys, and questions mode of travel, reason for use, ranking of priorities and ranking of concerns. The survey included multiple-choice questions and opportunities for comments. Trail users were encouraged to take the survey via postcards found at count stations and through social media; Twitter@SanJoseTrails and Instagram@SanJoseTrails. Daily reminders were posted during the week of September 10.

Recreation and Active Transportation

The survey supports some general observations about trail users:

- Visit trails on their own; **62.3%**
- Visit trails primarily for health (**57.3%**) and recreation (**21.6%**),
- The 2017 winter storms limited use of San José Trails for **55%**.
- The Guadalupe River Trail is used for **active transportation by 40%** of respondents. This is within range of past counts, where 35% to 55% have reported using the trail for commuting and errands.
- 21.4% reported motivation for use of trails to be for Fun and Relaxation. The Department of Parks, Recreation and Neighborhood Services mission is *Building Community through Fun*. Survey takers were asked about their primary motivation for trail usage. being offered as one possible response.

San José's percentage of persons using trails for active transportation seems to be high in comparison to national studies. Per the 2012 *National Survey of Pedestrian and Bicyclist Attitudes and Behaviors*, conducted by the Pedestrian and Bicycle Information Center, the percentage of travel by bike is 17% for errands, 7% for commuting to/from work, and 4% commuting to/from school. The combined national rate of 30% is lower than what is documented via the Trail Count survey along several San José Trails.

Other trail systems are used **predominantly for recreation**. Los Alamitos Creek Trail has only 14.7% of surveyed reporting that they use the trail for active transportation. Los Gatos Creek Trail has 18.0% and Coyote Creek Trail has 17.6% reporting use for active transportation.

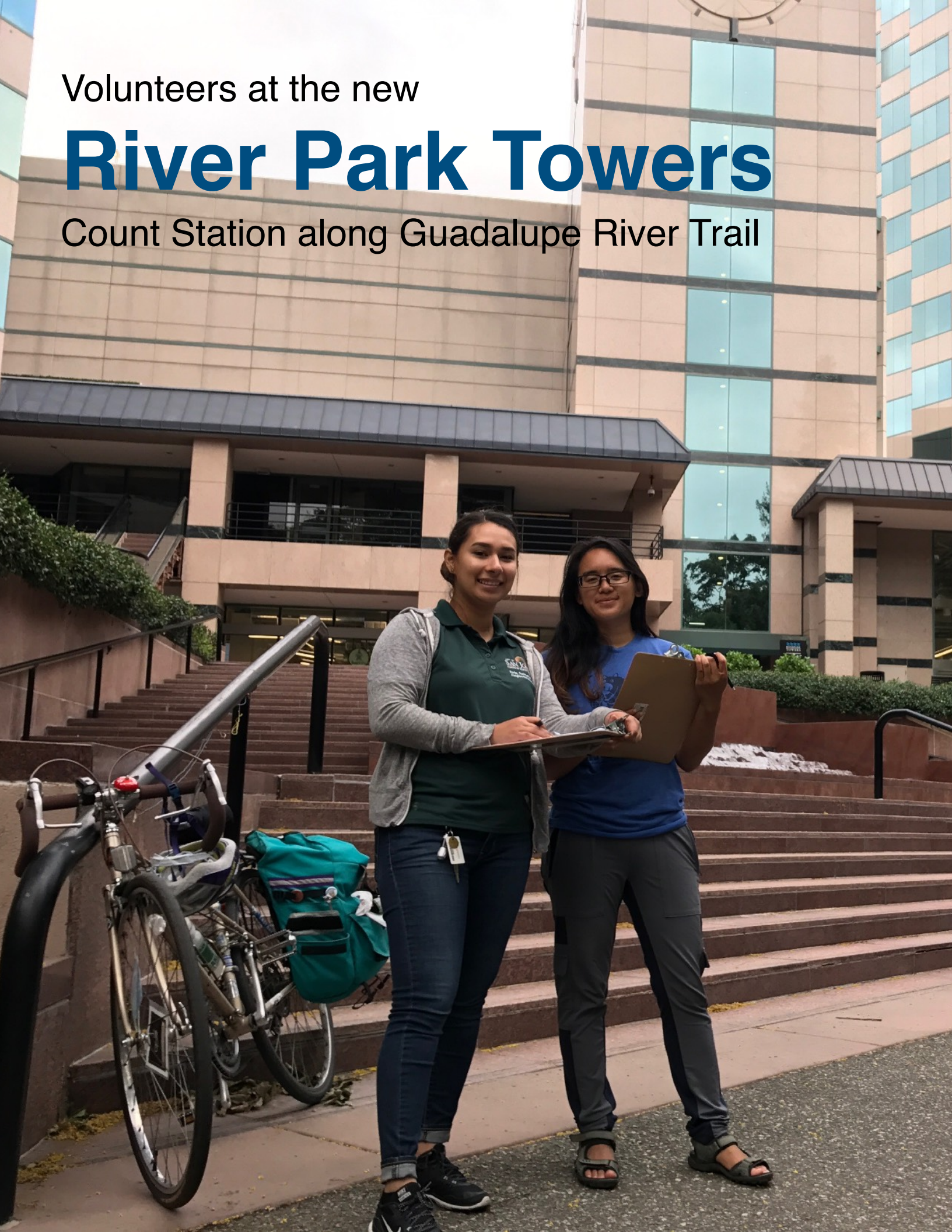
Question 1: What is your age?

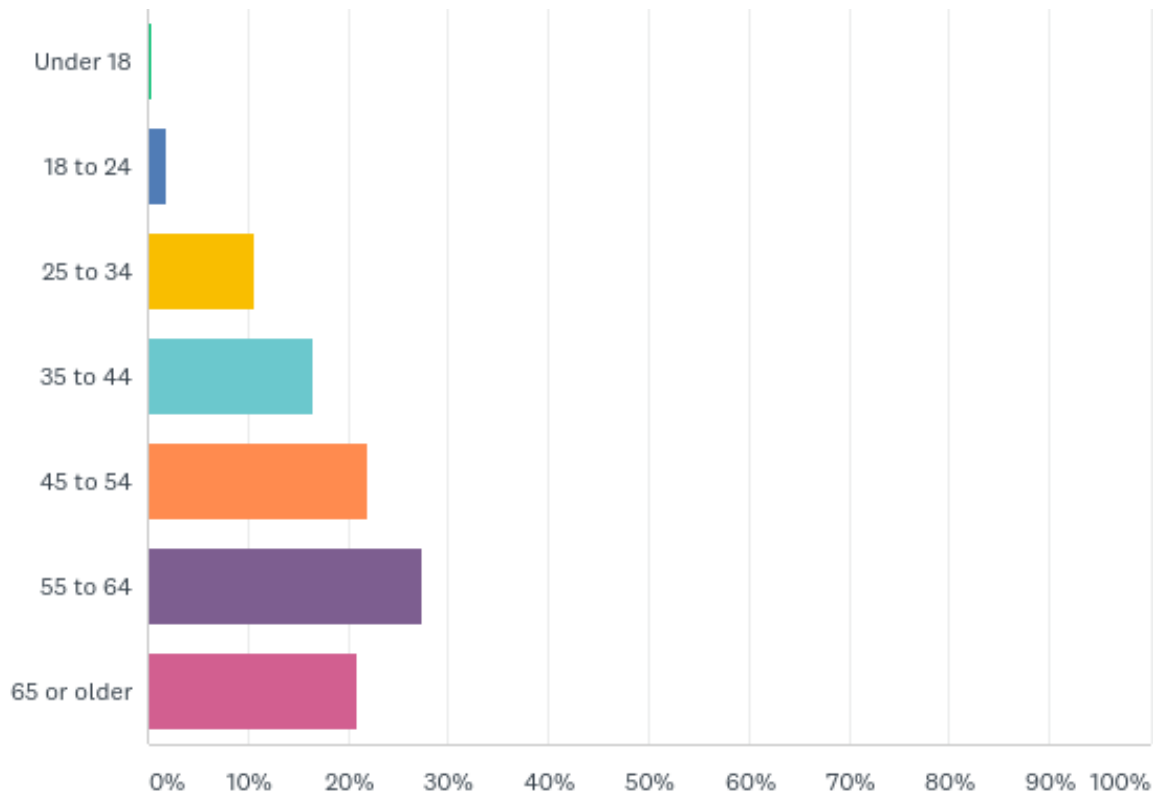
The count was conducted on a work day (Wednesday), with schools in session. this may have limited the number of younger people aware of the survey. The survey found only 9 respondents being 24 years of age or younger. Fifty-seven percent of survey takers reported being 55 years of age and older.

Volunteers at the new

River Park Towers

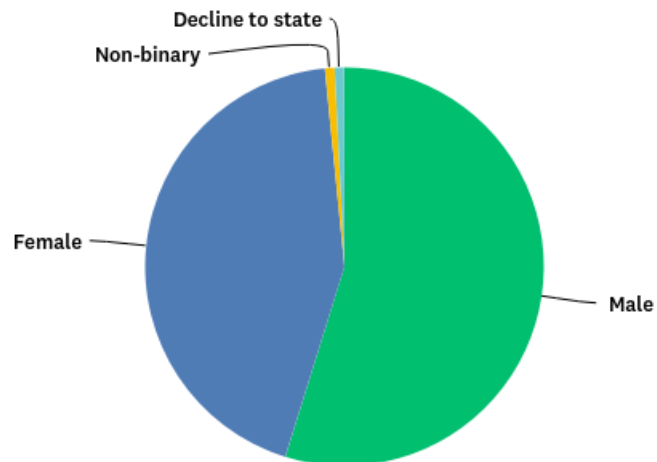
Count Station along Guadalupe River Trail





Q2: What is your gender?

Answered: 385 Skipped: 3

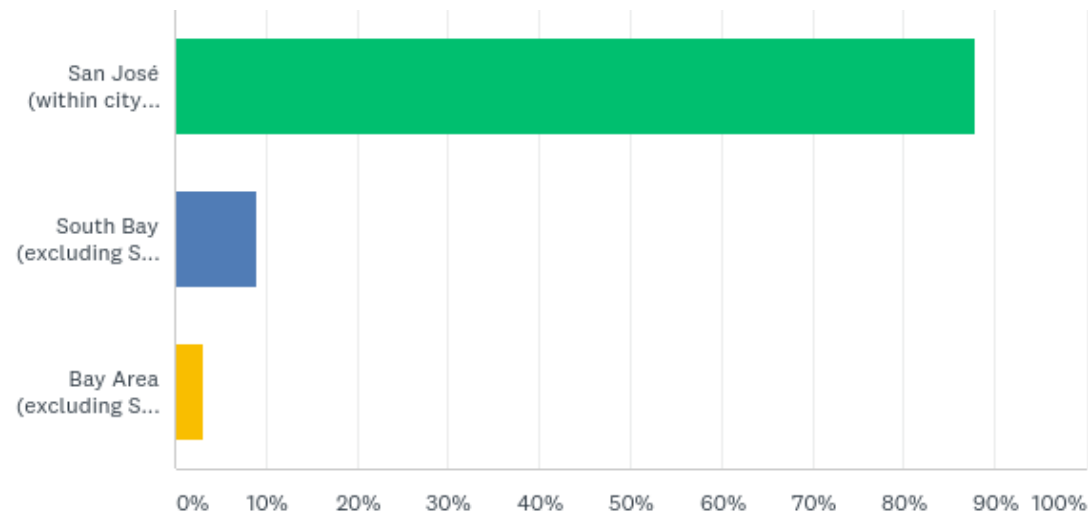




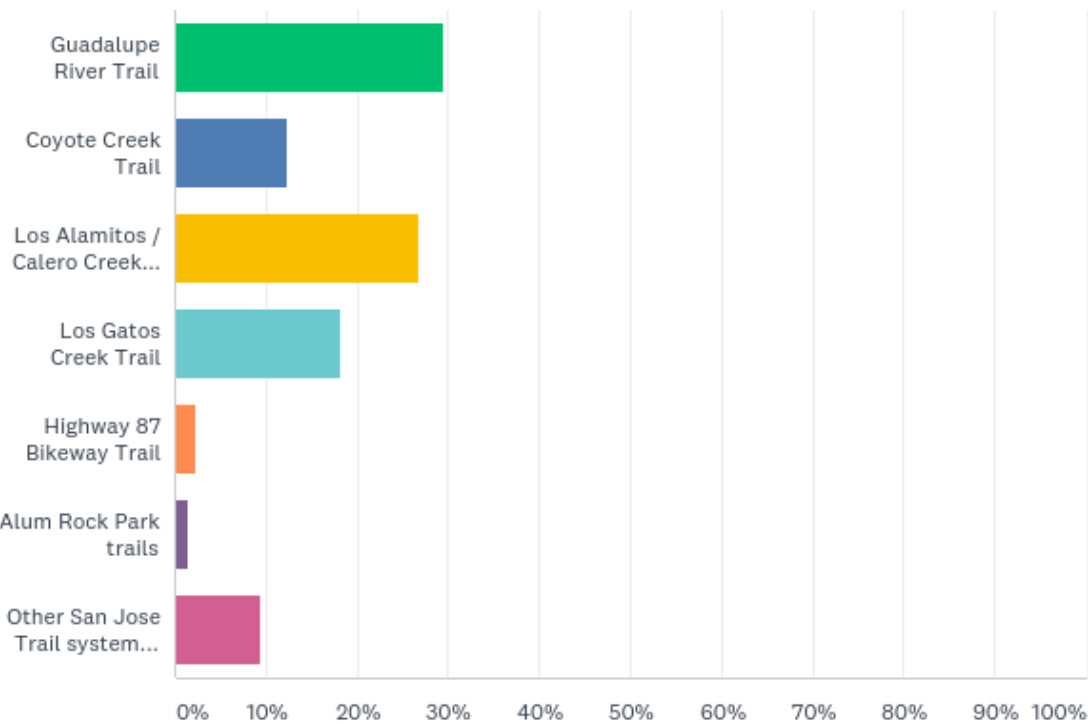
9.11

Score when asked
to rank San José
Trails from 1:10

Question 3: Where do you call home?



Question 4: Which San José Trail did you last visit?

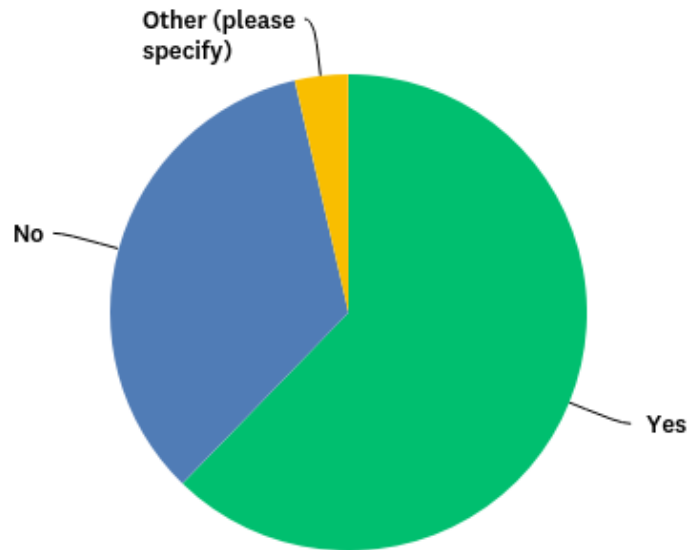




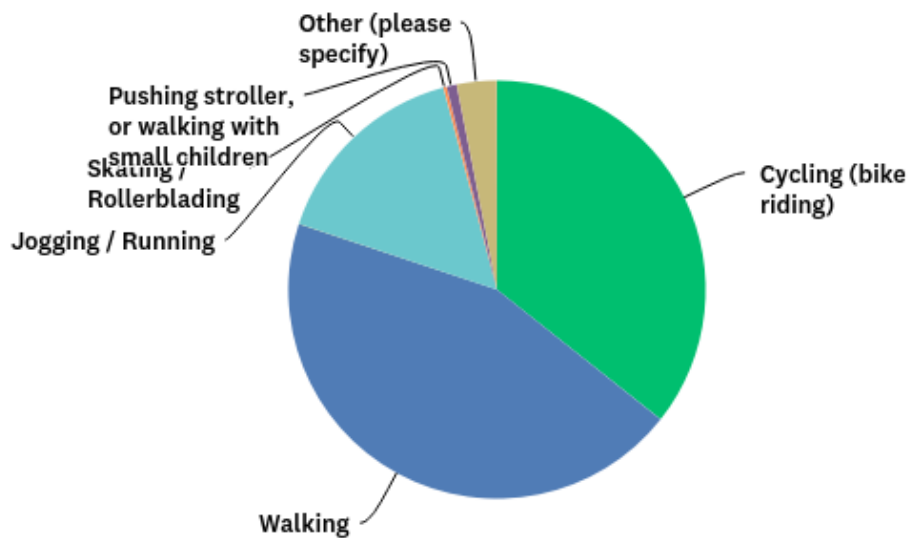
48.4%

of Weekday Trail Users are
55 years of age or older

Question 5: Did you visit the trail by yourself?



Question 6: On your recent visit to a San José Trail, what did you do along the trail?



12.4%

Out of town visitors

(Bay Area and beyond)

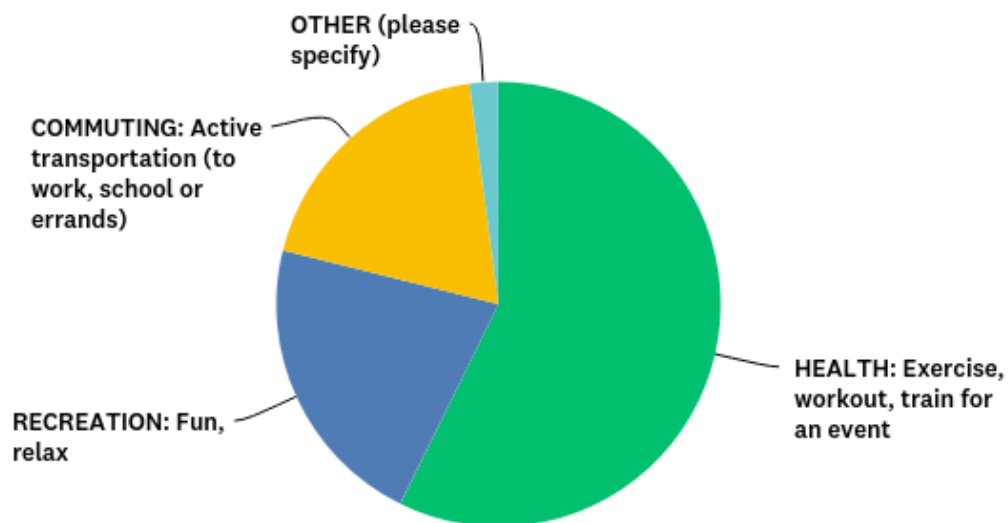


Question 7: What was your primary reason for using the trail today?

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
HEALTH: Exercise, workout, train for an event	57.29%	220
RECREATION: Fun, relax	21.61%	83
COMMUTING: Active transportation (to work, school or errands)	19.01%	73
OTHER (please specify)	2.08%	8
TOTAL		384

Question 8: What motivates you to use San José Trails?

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Fun / Joy	21.24%	82
Exercise	53.89%	208
Save money	0.26%	1
Environment	8.29%	32
Efficient use of time	5.44%	21





RECREATION & HEALTH

Primary reason for
enjoying a San José Trail

Guadalupe River Trail

59.9%

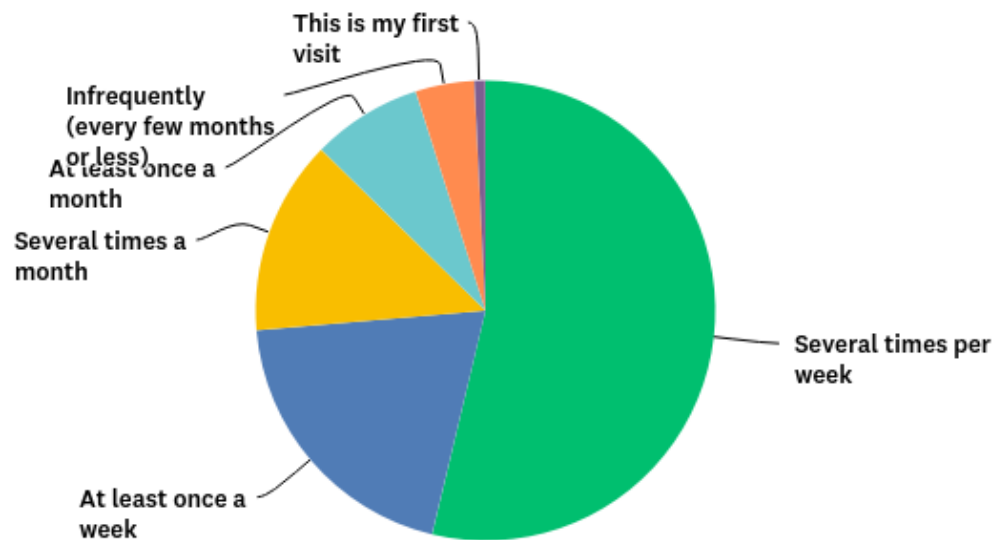
Los Gatos Creek

87.0%

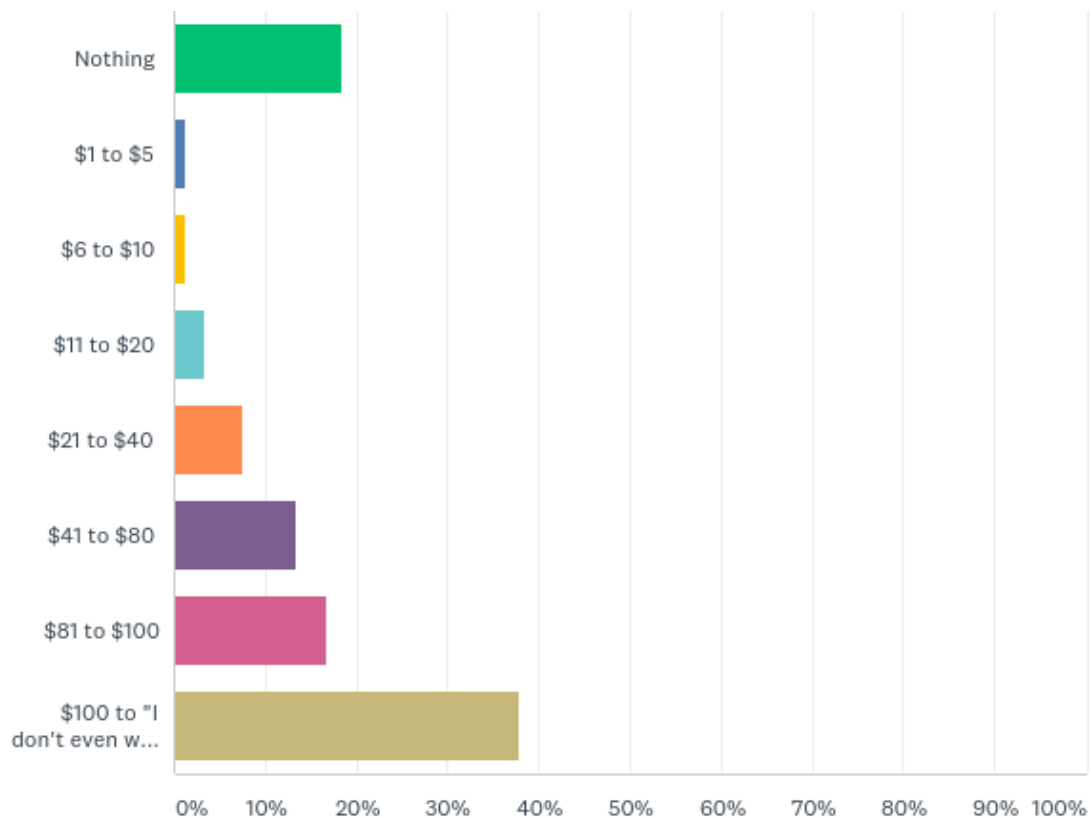
Los Alamitos Creek

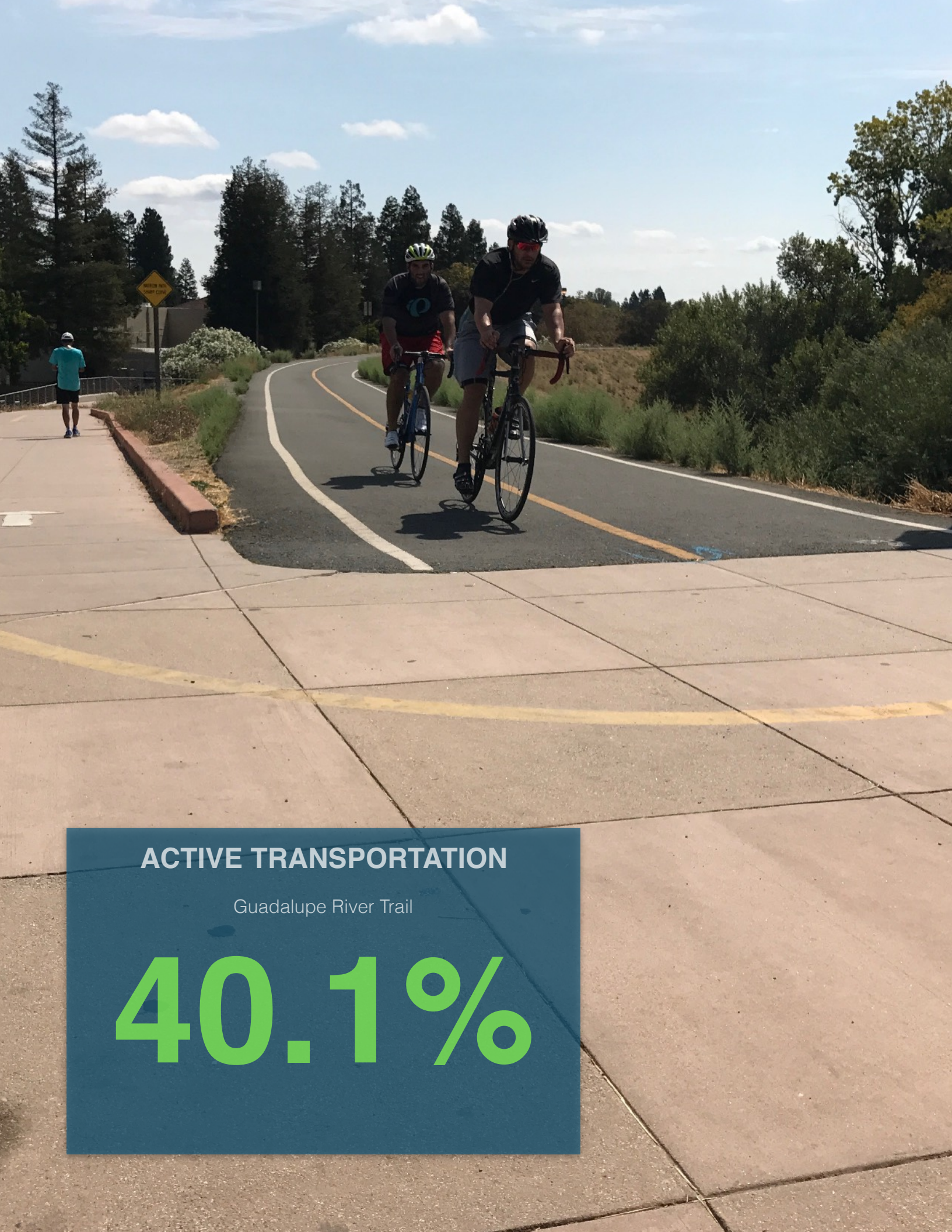
85.3%

Question 9: How often do you visit San José Trails?



Question 10: How much did you spend on snacks or meals as part of your trail visit?



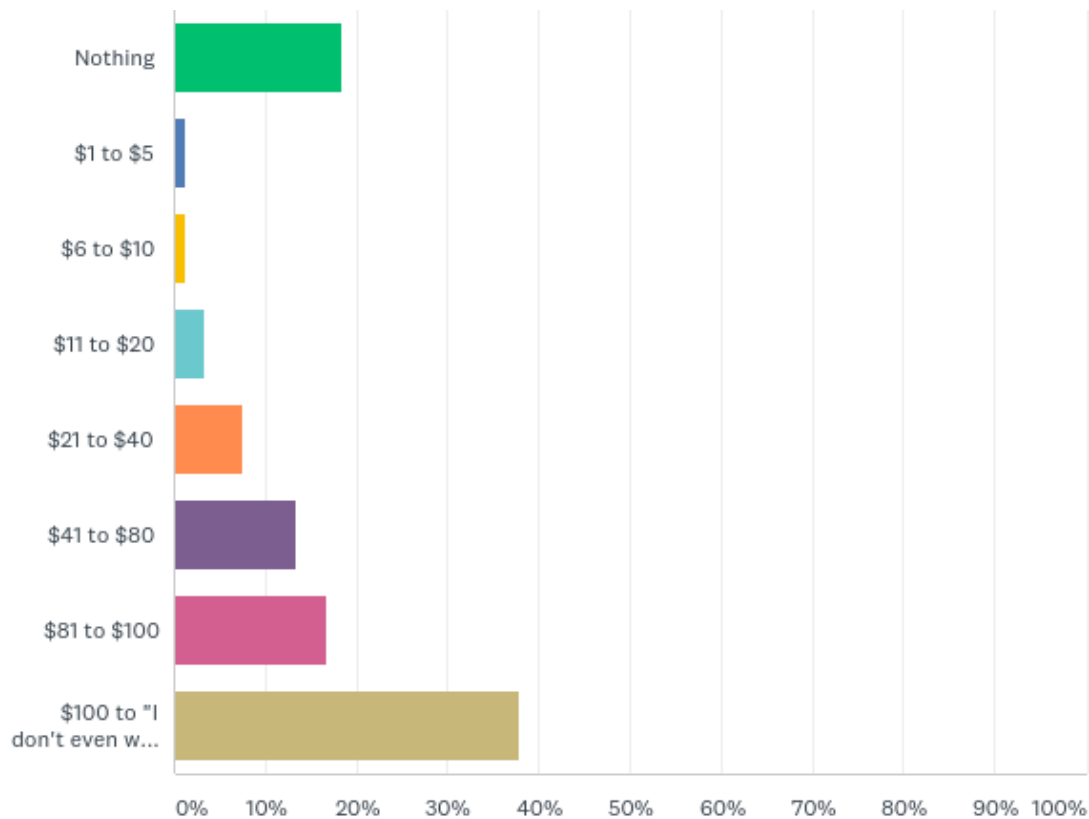


ACTIVE TRANSPORTATION

Guadalupe River Trail

40.1%

**Question 11: How much do you spend annually to enjoy San José Trails?
(shoes, clothing, fitness tools, bike-related expenses)**



Question 12: What is your impression of San José Trails from this and prior visits?

San José Trails ranked 9.11 out of 10.

Question 13: Did winter storms, with related flooding and debris, limit your use of San José Trails?

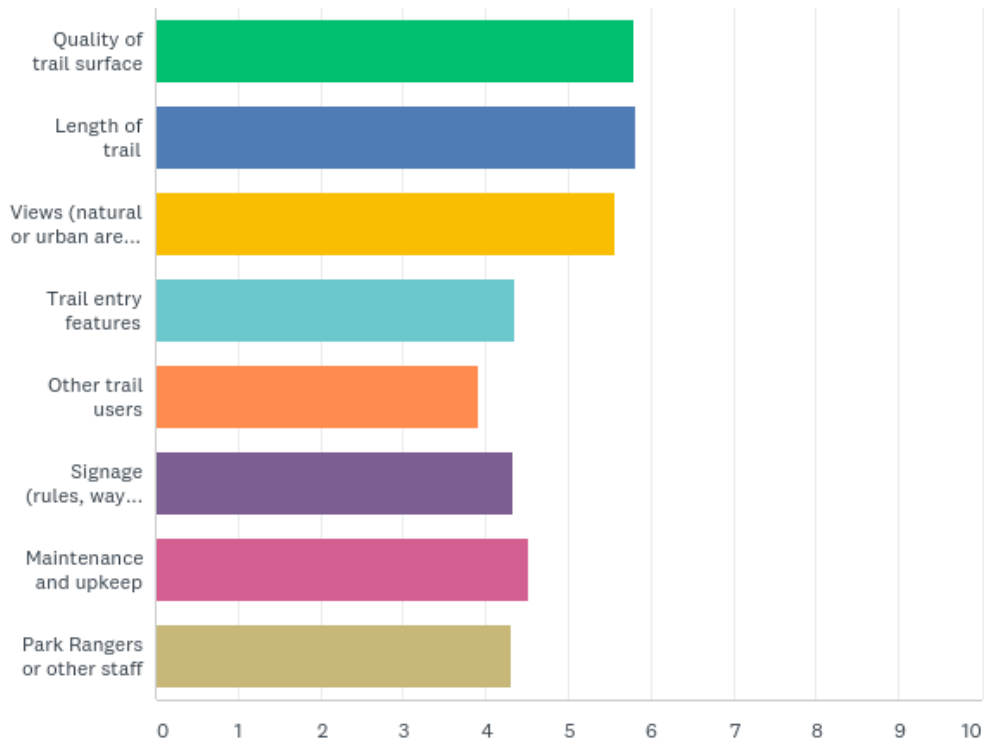
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	55.04%	213
No	35.66%	138
I didn't use a trail in the winter	6.46%	25
Other (please specify)	2.84%	11
TOTAL		387



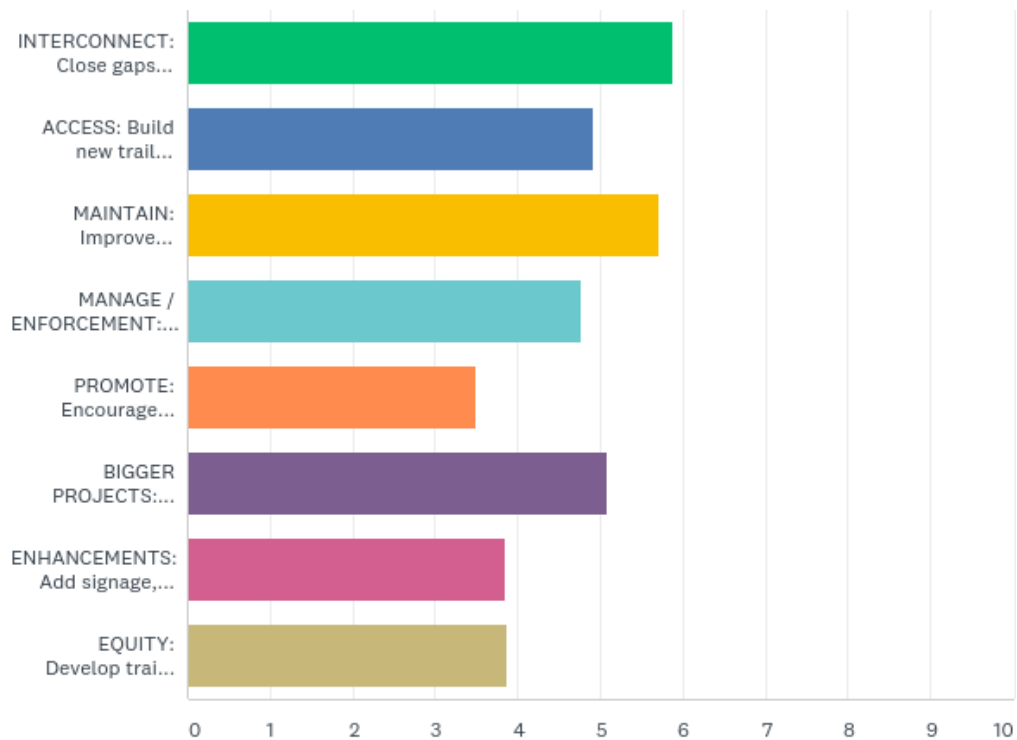
388

Respondents to On-Line Survey

Question 14: Rate the following about San José Trails?



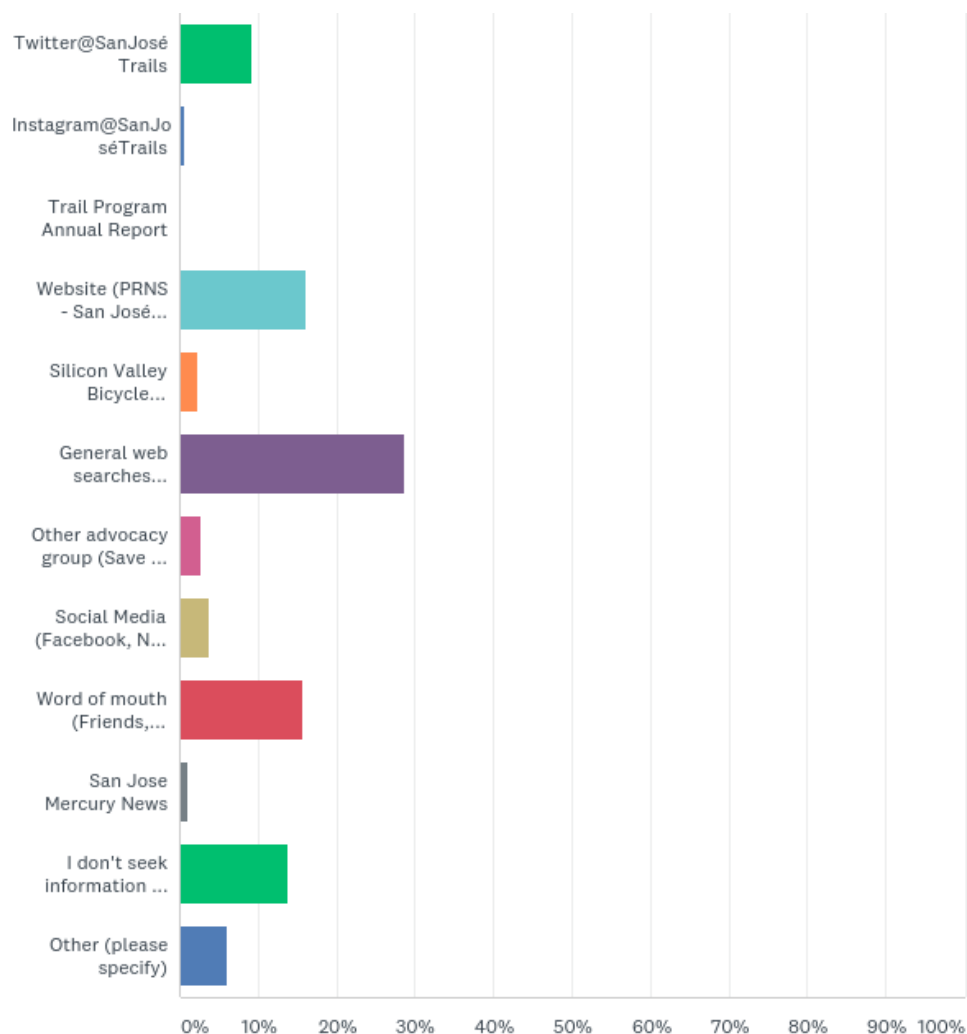
Question 15: What needs focus along San José Trails?



Question 16: Where do you seek information on San José Trails?

SVBC Source ACTC Favorite Parks Newspaper Friends
 PRNS Facebook Newsletter News Yelp
 Google Word of Mouth Trails Hiking
 Twitter Creek Internet Neighbors Club Alltrails
 Next Door Quicksilver Local Valley Web Searches

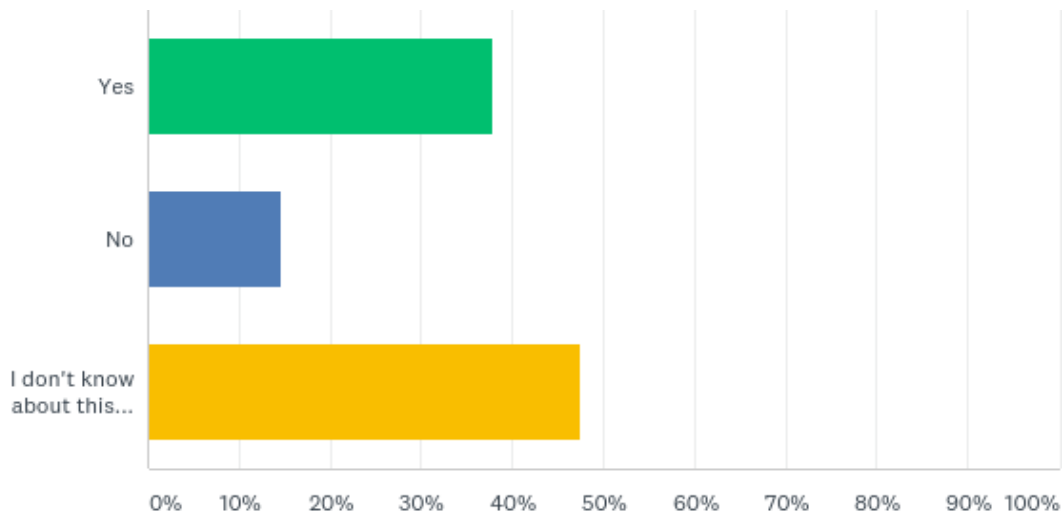
Question 17: What's your favorite source for local trail, hiking and biking news?



Question 18: What would make San José the country's best trail & walking city?

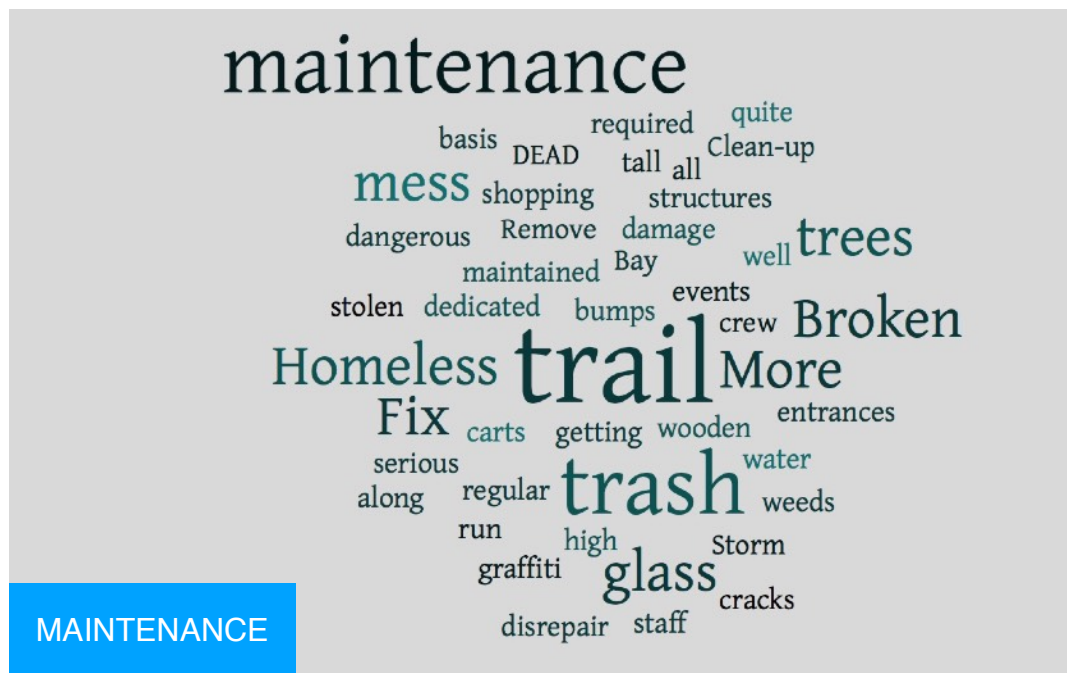
Network VTA Water Leash Laws Trail System Foot
Roads Clear Creek Better Maintained Trails
Homeless Miles Bike Paths **Connect** Fix
Safe Bathrooms Clean Environment
Interconnected Blossom Hill Continue Think Walk
Fun Access

Question 19: Do you enjoy events like Viva CalleSJ?



Question 20: Please provide any feedback that you may have.

Five major themes were identified in responses; Maintenance, Operations, Safety, Improvements, Customer Service and Positive & Negative Opinions. The following Word Clouds visually capture the feedback.



rangers
trails
Tasers
Firearms
Wish
patrols
patrol
plenty
complaint along safety taking child
day safer huge Need creeps activity
trail
More
protecting SJPD late concern felt
biggest early mess serving Feel
Homeless people bike safe
criminal
seen

SAFETY

Curb build
Creek River Trail Taylor
better marked well water public
signage downtown Extending
lanes required under St
shade stations driving aging
big Lack Complete
more trails Gatos
needed systems alternative
Connect mural between Safer bathrooms
coordinated bike clean existing spend
Los art connection Guadalupe
connecting clear Rule/Guidance
Loop cut population
ramp restrooms

IMPROVEMENTS

Concerns Park
Publish Trails info
Instagram speedy
exercise City futility
aware SJ
calls nor response
through Jose
rate new
return accounts Access
phone Twitter projects
San about maintenance
App Finding
website

CUSTOMER SERVICE

VivaCalleSJ continuing
more already biking
right trash San dog
improve fantastic encourage overrun
Downtown Clean route speed patrol
work Courtesy fixing fine long bikes
Homeless Commute making needs great
Alviso put Bike County high walk Party Gatos Trail
Some Infrastructure SJ issue well-being
worry Los start woman adding
Guadalupe bags grrrat trails criminals
walks cities stations left safe waste alum
health towards paving rock Thank utility perspective
addressed land dog-friendly lot priority
Jose's Jose José park awesome happiness Keep
make wildlife activities fast go good
taxpayer Bicyclists money proper walk/hike city
Thanks Love proper walk/hike city
crappy hazard Interconnect

OPINIONS

Concerns

Common themes & examples

SENSE OF SAFETY

- Need more park rangers
- More Rangers with firearms
- Enforce rules
- Dumping, Trash & Graffiti
- Transient activities
- Criminal activity
- Wish trails felt safer

MAINTENANCE

- Storm Clean-up
- Trash or broken glass
- Tall weeds
- Need for dedicated crews
- Homeless mess
- Stolen shopping carts
- Fix all pavement cracks & damage

INFRASTRUCTURE

- Water fountains
- Connect existing trails
- Clear signage
- Curb cut to on-street bikeways
- Guadalupe River Trail not marked well
- Need shade

CUSTOMER SERVICE

- Response rate isn't speedy
- Unaware of website & social accounts
- Seeking maintenance is exercise in futility
- Publish info on trail projects

Positive

**Thanks for making trails a priority.
Keep up the fine work!
Thank you, San Jose!
Trails are great!**

**Let's make San José best trail & biking city in the nation!
Important for our well-being, health and happiness.
It means a lot to be a woman and feel safe.
More bike trails, for pleasure and utility.**

**Thanks for paving Guadalupe Trail!
Keep making the trails awesome!
Downtown to Alviso is fantastic!
Keep up the grrrat work!**

Trail Program staff wish to acknowledge the many volunteers and partners that make Trail Count successful year after year. Our long-term partner, the Guadalupe River Park Conservancy has hosted one of the busiest stations. Our volunteers counted for 12 hours at six count stations across the City. And our consulting partners, Callander Associates and Mark Thomas and Company coordinated teams to support several stations.

Special thanks goes to Mollie Tobias, our volunteer coordinator. Mollie is always resourceful and pulls together a great team of volunteers year after year.

Thank you all!



Yves Zsutty
Trail Network Manager
Department of Parks Recreation
and Neighborhood Services
Trail Program